

## Macomb County

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### MSU Extension keeps promises and helps youth succeed

MSU Extension (MSUE) and Metro Detroit's Promise (MDP) work together to build the character and competence of youth.

MSUE helps MDP, a coalition of nonprofit and corporations, mobilize community support and keep the five promises it has made young people. The promises help young people:

- Develop ongoing relationships with caring adults,
- Create safe places with structured activities during non-school hours,
- Provide a healthy start through nutrition, exercise and health care,
- Build marketable skills through effective education and
- Encourage community service.

Last summer, MSUE received a grant from United Way of Southeastern Michigan to run "Staying Fit and Keeping Cool." While this program fulfilled all five promises to youths in the Mt. Clemens area, its main focus was on nutrition and exercise.

MSUE educators and other caring adults and volunteers provided eight weeks of hands-on instruction, including field trips to Crooked Creek Dairy Farm, Blake's Apple Orchard, "Stay Fit" at the Palace of Auburn Hills and the Mt. Clemens Farmers' Market.

The young people learned about the United States Department of Agriculture's food pyramid, reading food

labels, consuming dairy foods, food safety, preparing healthy snacks and physical activity.

Program evaluations showed that:

- Half of the youngsters involved indicated they reduced the amount of soda they drink daily.
- 30 percent now make healthier food choices.

Additionally, by focusing on violence prevention education, youths learned to identify "trouble starting" behavior and practiced skills to prevent conflict. These skills can be used in many other aspects of their lives.

Assessments indicated that:

- 30 percent increased their ability to calm down when dealing conflict.
- 30 percent improved their communication skills by increasing eye contact, asking for others input and seeking win-win solutions.

The participating youths also learned about careers related to agriculture, sports and entertainment and about the importance of literacy. Before the program was completed, youths gave back to the community by planting and maintaining a vegetable container garden and donating the plants and vegetables to needy families.

Selected as one of only six youth-serving agencies in Macomb County to be part of Metro Detroit's Promise, MSUE helped the organization fulfill the five promises essential for youths to succeed and lead healthy lives.

*Contact: Kathy Jamieson and Eileen Haraminac*

## Proper diagnoses protect and save county resources

Studying each leaf and stem from a spruce tree sample, Master Gardener volunteer Nanette Morency is careful to cross-check her observations with the diagnostic manual and MSU Extension



horticulturalist Sandra Richards before determining why the tree is ailing. Improper diagnosis, she knows, can result in incorrect treatment and a waste of resources.

“It looks like this spruce tree has been infested with spruce spider mites. This is often related to drought stress. First you need to correct the stress and then treat the tree with insecticidal soap in the spring, if the problem continues,” she says.

Like many other Master Gardener volunteers, Morency connects Macomb County residents with MSU resources, provides residents with information and offers economical, environmentally sound plant and pest management options.

MSUE staff members and volunteers consult with an average of 300 residents in Macomb every year to identify, diagnose and recommend treatment for disease and insect problems. This service helps residents avoid unnecessary, costly and possibly environmentally damaging herbicide and pesticide applications.

A survey of those who contacted Macomb MSUE for garden information in 2004 showed that:

- 70 percent followed Master Gardener recommendations.
- 56 percent changed how they managed the problem as a result of the diagnosis.
- 57 percent said their situation improved as a result of the diagnosis and appropriate action.

*Contact: Sandra Richards*

## Partnership aims to educate residents, revitalize area

Macomb MSUE shapes its programming and community involvement according to its strategic plan. During the recent planning process, several important community concerns were stated:

- Macomb County communities are in transition.
- Older communities need neighborhood and business revitalization.
- Families need help in budgeting, work responsibility and goal setting. While all families are in need of improved life skills, those in poverty have special challenges.

To address these concerns, MSUE recently partnered in the Van Dyke-Eight Mile Gateway (V-8) Initiative. This three-year effort will link people in Warren, Centerline and Detroit through educational, social and recreational programs designed to shatter the invisible Eight Mile Road division between city and suburbs.



Through a Ford Foundation grant, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has contributed \$130,000 in first-year funding. MSUE will:

- Conduct a survey to determine residents' views of neighborhood strengths and challenges.
- Educate residents about home and landscape improvement.
- Offer classes on affordable home buying, home ownership and repair and money management.

John Schweitzer, MSU professor of planning, design and construction, will be involved in the survey. He has conducted similar surveys in other communities as part of the Urban Collaborators, an initiative comprised of MSU campus and Extension staff members who concentrate on community building projects throughout the state.

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